

Best Practices at Kentucky State University

KSU's developmental philosophy is intended to provide access to quality instruction in a supportive learning environment to students with diverse learning styles. We believe that our students are unique, can achieve, and arrive with valuable skills. We seek to cultivate appropriate academic and behavioral skills to help our students participate effectively in classes that count toward degrees.

There are general practices that Kentucky State University follows for developmental education. However, the most innovative is the Academics with Attitude (AWA) Project. It is a campus-wide initiative for students entering the university at the first level of developmental needs. A pilot project was conducted beginning in the fall of 2008. Sixty students were placed in learning communities of 15. The communities will extend through their sophomore year. Students share classes, instructors, supplemental instruction, advisors, and other services. Students had English, math, reading, and UNV (Orientation) their first semester. With the exception of UNV, all classes had mandatory labs (called seminars after the first semester), supplemental instruction and tutoring.

Faculty and staff met weekly to discuss student progress, challenges, and to strengthen collaboration. University Orientation (UNV) instructors served as the main advisor for each cohort continuing through the first two years. The teaching team provides intrusive advising and conducts interventions periodically when students are not succeeding. The structure is designed to prevent students from falling through the cracks whether those cracks have to do with class work, financial aid, housing, family issues, health concerns, or behavior problems.

Data at the end of the first year indicated a marked increase in GPA and retention for those in the cohorts compared with a control group. In the summer of 2009, another pilot was started, this time adding a living component. Fifty five students were placed in residence halls together and a staff of living/learning assistants planned additional activities: morning activities designed to get students up, to breakfast, and to class on time; evening study tables; field trips; talent shows; regular all-student meetings. Mentoring programs, Men of Reason and Women of Standard began in the summer with staff and faculty serving as mentors. Of the fifty five students, fifty three returned in the fall.

One hundred sixty students are participating in the AWA project this fall. A program similar to that of the summer is planned. The summer students have asked to become mentors to the new students so in addition to staff and faculty mentoring them, the fall group will have peer mentors.

Beginning in the summer of 2010, all entering freshmen who meet the criteria (ACT scores of 15 or below in English, 16 or below in reading, 18 or below in math) will be required to enter AWA in the summer.

K-State is also collaborating with two local high school districts to bring high school students to campus for a half day. The event has two purposes: first, to encourage students to think about attending college and second, to take a math placement test so they know where they are in terms of college readiness. By taking the test in their sophomore or junior year, they will still have time to work on any pre-college needs while still in high school. The project targets students who are identified by their school personnel as having the ability to do college work but who may not have considered going to school beyond high school.

In addition to these two projects, Kentucky State University follows best practices for developmental education in the following ways:

1. Strong administrative support. Developmental education is a priority in budgeting as well as in oratory. There is a newly-created (January 2009) position for Director of Developmental Education. While developmental courses remain in the departments, there is coordination and collaboration between departments and other campus offices.
2. Mandatory assessment and placement systems. Students are placed based on ACT/SAT scores as well as their high school GPA. All students testing into developmental courses are required to complete those courses before moving on to more advanced work. All students are assessed in the first week of classes to verify correct placement.
3. Mandatory orientation. There are several offered during the summer before the academic year starts. In addition, UNV 101 classes are offered for all students who are conditional admits or who are in developmental classes. UNV 101 is an orientation, study skills, support class designed to continue support throughout the first semester.
4. Varied coursework and multiple approaches.

The following developmental courses are offered at KSU:

English

ENG 088: Reading (3) Required for students scoring 16 and below on the Enhanced ACT Reading Composite. Three hours of classroom instruction plus individualized instruction to increase the student's general reading competence. (Does not count toward degree requirement.)

ENG 089: Basic Writing I (3) Required for students scoring 15 and below on the Enhanced ACT English Composite. This course emphasizes the development of unified, coherent, and accurately edited paragraphs. (Does not count toward degree requirement.)

ENG 099: Basic Writing (3) Prerequisite: ENG 089 or initial placement with an Enhanced English ACT Composite of 16-18. Designated to eliminate PCC deficiency in English. Emphasizes developing multi-paragraph essays. (Does not count toward degree requirement.)

ENG 103: College Reading (3) Prerequisite: ENG 088 or initial placement with an Enhanced ACT Reading Composite of 16-18. Follows ENG 088 Reading. Designed to develop critical skills needed to comprehend university material. (ENG 103 is a credit-bearing course that is developmental but is not considered "remedial").

English as a Second Language

ENG 095: Fundamentals of English for Foreign Students (3) Familiarizes international students with fundamentals of written and spoken English, focusing on English used in academic and social settings. (Does not count toward degree requirement.)

ENG 096: Fundamentals of Informative Writing for Foreign Students (3) Familiarizes foreign students with American academic and institutional writing formats, including summaries, paraphrases, definitions, abstracts, reviews, critiques, memorandums, and letters. (Does not count toward degree requirement.)

Mathematics

MAT 095: Fundamentals of Algebra (3) Required of all students whose placement data do not warrant enrollment in MAT 099 or above. Arithmetic, and properties of real numbers, ratio and proportion, introduction to statistics and algebra. (Does not count toward degree requirement.)

MAT 097: Intermediate Level Algebra (3) Prerequisite: MAT 095 or appropriate score on placement test. Linear equations and inequalities, systems of linear equations, polynomials and polynomial functions, quadratic equations, rational expressions, radicals, and rational exponents. (Does not count toward degree requirements.)

5. Supportive faculty and staff. Seventy five percent of the sections of developmental math and English are taught by full time faculty.
6. Academic support. The Academic Centre for Excellence is an integral part of the AWA program as well as serving those students who are not in the AWA. Best practices call for trained tutors and supplemental instruction. Tutors, SI instructors, and lab personnel are a strong component of the program. They participate as part of the AWA team meetings and offer their time and energy generously outside of class as well as for their academic duties.
7. Academic advising. In addition to the AWA advising, general advising is available for all KSU students including all DE students. Advisors are present at summer orientation sessions. A student athletic advisor mentors the athletes.
8. On-going evaluation is a strong component. Evaluation focuses on student progress, measuring program outcomes, and developing continuing improvement plans.